DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 479 485 CS 512 322

AUTHOR	Kirby, Mary C.
TITLE	The Effects of Weekly, Sustained Silent Reading Time on Recreational Reading Habits and Attitudes in a 9th Grade English Class.
PUB DATE	2003-05-00
NOTE	58p.; Appendix B, a sustained silent reading pamphlet, is not available from ERIC.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research (143) -- Tests/Questionnaires (160)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Grade 9; High School Students; High Schools; Instructional Effectiveness; Literary Genres; Questionnaires; *Reading Habits; *Reading Materials; *Recreational Reading; *Student Attitudes; *Student Motivation; *Sustained Silent Reading

ABSTRACT

Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) has been around in various forms for over 40 years. While this subject has received much study in elementary schools, the influence of SSR on typical, non-at-risk high school students' reading habits appears to be lacking. The purpose of this study is to examine the effect of SSR on ninth grade students' recreational reading habits. A questionnaire was developed to address how this practice affected the students' recreational reading habits over a two-month period. This questionnaire was administered both at the beginning and end of the two-month period, and determined change in students' perceptions of SSR on their recreational reading habits. Students responded by noting that SSR introduced them to genres that they may not have otherwise read. Students felt they did increase the number of books they read throughout the time of the study. Participants in the study overwhelmingly stated that they were glad they participated in SSR each week. Students in both the pre- and post-questionnaires indicated that they read for the majority of the time allotted for SSR. Appendixes contain the student questionnaire and silent reading packet. (Contains 4 figures and 13 references.) (Author/PM)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

CS CSTR 0076

ED 479 485

Title Page

The Effects of Weekly, Sustained Silent Reading Time on Recreational Reading Habits and Attitudes in a 9th Grade English Class.

Mary C. Kirby

Division of Education

School of Business, Education, and Leadership

Dominican University of California

San Rafael, CA

May 2003

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

M. C. Kirby

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

CS 512 322

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Acknowledgements

Each day into my classroom walk over a hundred students looking at me to teach them something new and exciting. While I do not live up to that expectation each day, they sure do teach me something about life, education, and myself on a regular basis. I thank my students over the course of the past six years for inspiring me to research a topic that touches all of our lives: reading. In particular, thank you to my 2002-2003 freshmen students for working with me in this endeavor.

Thank you to the entire English department for your support and advice. I could not have pulled this year off without my daily lunch break and the very non-school related discussions that occur during our thirty-minute lunch "hour". Mr. Pat Lickiss, principal and WASC Chair, thank you for having me on your committee a couple of years ago and for giving me the opportunity to come work with you. You have supported me through all of this and have continued to provide me opportunities to grow as a teacher and faculty member.

To my teachers at Dominican University, thank you for allowing me to participate in your newly reformatted Masters Program. Through all the trials and tribulations, today it all seems well worth it. I would especially like to thank Madalienne Peters and Kristian McIntyre for their guidance and support.

Furthering my education would not have been possible without the love and support of my family. Thank you for the encouragement to enter the master's program and the ongoing encouragement you provided throughout the year. Your patience with my lack of free time and with me is a testament to your love. And of course, my husband, Brent, without you I would have starved, lived

in a pigsty, and probably lost my mind. Thank you for helping me to remember why I put myself through this in the first place and for keeping me focused as to what really matters in my life.

Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS 2

TABLE OF CONTENTS 4

ABSTRACT 6

INTRODUCTION 7

- STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM 7
- PURPOSE STATEMENT 8
- RESEARCH QUESTIONS 8
- THEORETICAL RATIONAL 9

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE 9

- REVIEW OF PREVIOUS RESEARCH 9
  - Sustained Silent Reading Practices in Seventh-Grade Classrooms 9
  - The Report of the Commission on Reading 13
  - Strategies for Reluctant Readers 23
  - Developing Reading and Writing 26
- SUMMARY OF MAJOR THEMES 28
  - Practice 28
  - Organizational Practice 29
  - Evaluation Methods of SSR 30
  - Advantages of SSR 30
  - Disadvantages of SSR 32
- EXTENSION OF THE LITERATURE 33

METHODS 33

- SAMPLE AND SITE 33
- ACCESS AND PERMISSIONS 34
- DATA GATHERING STRATEGIES 34
- DATA ANALYSIS APPROACH 35
- ETHICAL STANDARDS 35

FINDINGS 36

DISCUSSION 42

LIMITATIONS 49

OVERALL SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY 50

REFERENCES 51

APPENDICES 53

APPENDIX A 54
SSR Student Questionnaire 54
APPENDIX B 57
Sustained Silent Reading pamphlet 57

Abstract

Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) has been around in various forms for over forty years. While this subject has received much study in the elementary schools, the influence of SSR on typical, non-at-risk high school students reading habits appears to be lacking. The purpose of this study is to examine the effect of SSR on 9th grade students' recreational reading habits. The literature review reveals extensive research with at risk populations and elementary and middle school age students. Thus leading for the need to examine the use of SSR on average ninth grade students. A questionnaire was developed to address how this practice has affected their recreation reading habits over a two-month period. This questionnaire was administered in January and March to determine change in students' perceptions of Sustained Silent Reading on their recreational reading habits. The first questionnaire consisted of 78 freshmen students not differentiated by sex. The second questionnaire, given in March, consisted of 79 freshmen high school students, 40 boys and 39 girls. The numbers are not consistent due to absences by the participants. The study took place at a California high school in an affluent suburban community located in the East Bay region of the San Francisco Bay Area. The high school has a daily average attendance rate of 98.6% and 80% of the students move on to a two or four year college. The school is 81.5% white, 7.7% Hispanic, 7.1% Asian, and 2.8% other. The participants in the study identified themselves as 81% white, 4% Hispanic, 9% Asian, 1% African American, and 5% other.

Introduction

Stephanie sits down as soon as she walks into class. She can't wait to once again be caught up in Sally's life. Stephanie knows she will soon see who the girl, Sally, is going to pick. Is it going to be the boy whose father just died? She has been spending more time with him and he does seem really nice. What was his name? Todd, oh that's right. Or is Sally going to pick Jack, the handsome football player. Jack has been acting a bit out of sorts lately, and Stephanie wonders, as does the fictional Sally, if Jack had anything to do with Todd's father's death. Stephanie excitedly opens her novel and dives back into the lives of Stephanie, Todd and Jack.

Across the room, Tony sits and stares at his open book. He thinks to himself, "...another boring Monday of reading." Out loud he murmurs, barely audible, "I hate to read." A few heads turn to Tony and nod in agreement. Monday, the day the whole class must endure an entire period of silence while reading a book of their choice. Tony has learned to play the game. He sits quietly, staring at his book while not really reading the words that fill the pages in front of him.

Statement of the Problem

Sustained Silent Reading was introduced as an educational practice in the 1960's and has since been carried out in various forms in classrooms across the nation. The original program called for a school-wide daily time when everyone in the school stops what they are doing to sit down and read. Reading material is not monitored and students are not evaluated on their reading during SSR.

In response to students' lack of interest in reading for pleasure and a decrease in reading as a leisure activity, the national study, Becoming a Nation of Readers, recommended implementation of SSR in classrooms across America (Anderson et. al.1985). The rational of sustained silent reading is that the more students spend time in the practice of reading, the greater their reading proficiency will increase.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to examine the effects of Sustained Silent Reading on students' recreational reading habits and attitudes. The study seeks to find if participation in once a week, fifty minute, sustained silent reading time will influence or change ninth grade students' recreational reading habits and attitudes.

Research Questions

This study used the following questions to guide the development of the student questionnaire:

1. Does silent reading help to increase students' enjoyment of reading?
2. Does silent reading increase student reading at home?
3. What are students' attitudes towards silent reading and do they change throughout the year?
4. Do students read during silent reading time?
5. Does SSR in English class influence recreational reading in other classes (do students take out their recreational reading books to fill time in other classes)?

These questions originate from the overriding purpose of the study which is to know the effects of weekly, sustained silent reading time on recreational reading habits and attitudes in a 9th grade English class.

Theoretical Rational

Becoming a Nation of Readers: The Report of the Commission on Reading published in 1985 focused the nation's attention to the deficits American children were having in the area of reading and recommended numerous actions to increase student reading capacity (Anderson et. al). The study concluded the only way to for students to become stronger at reading is to practice reading. The report goes on to say that the best predictor of reading comprehension, vocabulary size, and gains in reading achievement for elementary age students was the act of leisure time reading. Therefore, the study recommends that one method of increasing students reading time and in turn, increasing overall reading proficiency, is for teachers to implement Sustained Silent Reading programs.

Review of the Literature

Review of Previous Research

Sustained Silent Reading Practices in Seventh-Grade Classrooms

Nagy, Campenni, and Shaw (2002) describe sustained silent reading as "students in reading self-selected material for an extended period" (p. 1). They found that sustained silent reading had various names including DEAR (Drop

Everything and Read), SQUIRT (silent, quiet, uninterrupted individualized reading time), and USSR (uninterrupted sustained silent reading). Whatever the program was called at the school sites, the basic principles were the same.

According to the authors, SSR grew out of a concern for student reading achievement. "The program is based on the belief that self-selection motivates students to read with interest, and the resulting extended period of practice improves their reading achievement" (p. 1, 2000). Nagy, Campenni, and Shaw also found that another important element of SSR programs is the idea of modeling. As the program was first described (Hunt 1970) students, teachers, administrators, secretaries, maintenance staff, etc, would all stop what they were doing and read at the same time as a school community. Therefore, the message to the students is that even adults believe that reading is important.

The authors cite numerous studies that show the benefits of SSR. They found several studies that indicate students who engage in SSR improve in both reading achievement and attitude toward reading. One study cited by Nagy, Campenni and Shaw (Grubaugh, 1986) showed that because students have free choice in book selection in SSR, they would experience improvement in their background knowledge and therefore provide the students with a better base to relate to their subject area texts.

Nagy, Campenni and Shaw (2000) examined the challenges of implementing an SSR program in seventh grade classrooms. They developed a questionnaire that focused on organization, material, and evaluation. Subjects included "96 seventh-grade reading teachers from 32 school districts in 5

northeastern Pennsylvania (USA) counties (Luzerne, Wyoming, Susquehanna, Wayne, & Lackawanna)" (p. 1, 2000).

The authors of the study decided to sample seventh grade teachers for two main reasons. The first is that in seventh grade students generally begin to move from class to class. "Therefore, from middle school onward teachers have numerous instructional goals and objectives that must be met during fixed time periods, and they must decide on the activities they will implement in order to achieve these goals and objectives. They must consider how much -- if any -- of this quite limited time they will devote to SSR" (p. 2, 2000). The second reason seventh grade was selected is because this is about the time when students begin to develop their own interests and often these interests are not supported by the school and community. This can pose a difficulty to teachers when students choose content that may be sexual or violent in nature.

The study found that few schools in the study had a school wide SSR program, as was the original idea of the SSR program. Teachers cited numerous reasons for not participating in SSR within their classrooms. Two of the top reasons were lack of time and students not coming prepared. Of the teachers that did participate in an SSR program within their classrooms, they felt it was very successful. They also felt that students enjoyed SSR. The authors found that teachers were integral in both the decision to start an SSR program at school sites, as well as to discontinue its use at the schools that stopped having an SSR program.

Nagy, Campenni, and Shaw found that teachers' goals for introducing an SSR program were similar to the original goals of SSR. "Teachers found that they wanted to model the value of reading, provide students with the opportunity to read, and increase their students' reading vocabulary through active modeling" (p. 3, 2000).

The authors also found that only 2% of the schools had every member of the school community read at the same time as the original program set forth. They determined the reason this may be because individual teachers seem to be making the choice to implement SSR not administrators mandating the practice for the entire school or district.

Nagy, Campenni, and Shaw found that teachers were very satisfied with their SSR programs. They did not find this surprising as teachers have a "strong voice in decision making regarding SSR initiation and implementation" (p. 3, 2000). They also found that teachers felt that their students were satisfied with SSR.

The schools sampled differed considerably in the number of days and amount of time devoted to SSR. The average participated in SSR three days a week for about 22 minutes a day. The range of days was one to five and the range in time was 4 minutes to 50 minutes. Most teachers chose to have students engage in SSR at a specific time (beginning or end of class) or specific day (usually Friday).

More than 50% of the teachers restricted their students reading selection to approved reading lists. Students did not have input in these lists. 69%

discouraged some type of reading material such as magazines, newspapers, comics, textbooks, etc. When students came without material 77% of teachers supplied materials, 11% allowed students to make a selection from classroom library, 8% lowered students grade, and 4% gave disciplinary action. Ninety-three percent of respondents had a classroom library.

Sixty-five percent of the teachers do not evaluate SSR as it goes against the original conception of the program. The respondents that do evaluate SSR have many methods: reports, tests, journals, discussion, conferences, and projects.

Overall, Nagy, Campenni, and Shaw found that teachers supported the practice of SSR and were satisfied with it. The authors found "teachers feel that SSR helps them to achieve goals common to many reading curricula: developing students' positive attitude to reading, improving their achievement, and fostering in them a life-long habit of reading for information and enjoyment" (p. 4, 2000). Teachers also felt empowered because they were able to determine how and when to implement SSR.

The Report of the Commission on Reading

Anderson et. al. (1985) found without the ability to read, students would be unable to achieve excellence in high school and beyond. The study defined reading as "the process of constructing meaning from written text" (p. 7, 1985). Reading excellence requires a reader to realize three things:

1) ***Reading is a holistic act***: reading includes identifying words and discriminating letters. All of the parts must be working together to actually be reading.
2) ***One must practice for success***: reading does not just come naturally to everyone. To be an excellent reader, one must continually practice reading to become stronger.
3) ***Interpretation varies by reader***: each reader brings his or her own experiences into a reading and these experiences color how a reader interprets a reading selection.

Anderson et. al. further explain that reading includes obtaining information from the letters and words of text, selecting and using knowledge about people, places, and things, and knowledge about the texts and how they are organized. Readers and texts must act together to create meaning.

Anderson et. al. conclude that there are five basic generalizations about reading. First, reading is a constructive process. Texts are not self-explanatory. Readers must bring with them to a text prior knowledge to be able to construct meaning. Research has shown that school age children in the school setting have a difficult time knowing to draw on prior knowledge when reading a text. Second, reading must be fluent. Readers must be able to identify individual words and make sense of those words. If a reader cannot identify individual words, their reading speed will decrease and they will spend too much time decoding words and not recalling the meaning of a selection. Third, reading must be strategic. Skilled readers know that they will not understand everything they

read. They are flexible. Skilled readers come prepared to a reading knowing what to do when they face a difficulty whereas unskilled readers do not know what to do when they face a difficulty.

> "Studies show that immature readers lack two strategies used by unskilled readers. Assessing their own knowledge relative to the demands of the task, and monitoring their comprehension and implementing fix-up strategies when comprehension fails" (p. 13, 1985).

The fourth generalization Anderson et. al. found about reading is that reading requires motivation. Becoming a skilled reader requires learning two key components: learning to sustain attention throughout a text and learning that written material can be interesting and fun. The final generalization Anderson et. al. put forth was that reading is a continuously developing skill. Continuing to practice reading will lead to better development and refinement of reading skills.

The report stated that learning to read begins at home when a child is an infant. "The single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children" (p. 23, 1985). When reading aloud it is recommended that parents ask their children questions that require thoughtful responses and teach them how to ask questions. Also, making connections with outside experiences will help to enable children to make connections on their own later. Giving a child many outside experiences such as going to the zoo or park will provide the child with more prior knowledge from which to draw on in later reading experiences as well.

In a child's school age years, parents can continue to have an influence an impact on their child's reading. Parents are encouraged to monitor school

performance and provide support for homework. Most importantly, a parent should stay personally involved with their children's growth as a reader.

To learn to read a child must have at least a basic vocabulary, a reasonable range of knowledge about the world around them, and the ability to talk about their knowledge. For students who did not experience strong oral language at home, storybook time in the classroom is a valuable time. Storybook time engages students in discussions about the reading that enable students to make inferences about plot and characters. A child's ability to listen, listening comprehension, has been proved to be a moderately good predictor of reading comprehension in first through fifth graders.

Students today enter kindergarten with various amounts of reading knowledge. Teachers have the difficult task of determining where a student is upon entering and build on the base for each student. Many students in America today receive some formal reading instruction in kindergarten although it is not always the case. Formal instruction will always begin in the first grade and this typically begins with students using a basal reading program.

"Basal reading programs are complete packages of teaching materials" (p. 35, 1985). Basal reading programs provide entire reading curriculum including, instructional strategies, anthologies, practice exercises and many optional and supplemental materials for teachers to use in the classroom and at home. Even though there are more than a dozen well-known basal reading programs on the market, about 70% of American elementary schools purchase one or more of the top five programs. These reading programs account for 75 to 90% of what

occurs during the reading period in elementary schools. Obviously, the basal reading programs have a great influence on what American children read.

Every major reading program includes materials to teach phonics to beginning readers. "Phonics is instruction in the relationship between letters and speech sounds" (Anderson et. al., 1985, p. 38,). The largest problem with phonics instruction was that many of the reading programs teach too many letter-sound relationships and often drag out the process over too many years.

The researchers concluded that there are two basic approaches to phonics instruction-explicit and implicit instruction. Explicit instruction is "sounds associated with letters are identified in isolation and then 'blended' together to form words" (p 39, 1985). Implicit instruction differs because "the sound associated with a letter is never supposed to be pronounced in isolation" (Anderson et. al., 1985, p. 39).

The report found that explicit instruction could have some benefits. The research shows "teachers who spend more than average amounts of time on blending produce larger than average gains of first and second grade reading achievement scores" (p. 39, 1985). However, not all students will learn in this method and by spending more time with this style those students may be left behind. The report found that teachers and schools throughout the country use implicit instruction more often. The researchers established in observations of teachers, many blended instruction of the two types and did not rely solely on implicit or explicit instruction practices. Both programs appear to have some

drawbacks but ultimately the goal is to help children get approximate pronunciation and the alphabetic principal.

In the classroom children should experience both oral and silent reading. Rereading oral selections helps to develop fluency. The time students spend on silent reading should be increased. "Time spent on either oral or silent reading is time well spent" (Anderson et. al., 1985, p. 54). Beginning readers should be interesting to students, as well as, comprehensive and fun. Early reader readers need to use pictures to convey the plot and characters. They selections should tell a complete, interesting, story. Early readers should also use words that students are familiar with and understand rather than unfamiliar words to encourage fluency. Teachers and parents should engage students in discussions to help them make connections between what they know and what they read. Discussions should attempt to motivate students through higher level thinking and questioning. "Teachers should directly instruct children in skills and strategies that help them become better reader" (p. 58, 1985).

As students develop their reading skills, textbooks become more challenging. Textbook publishers and writers decide on what reading level to put into a textbook. To do this, they have created "readability formulas".

> "The formulas now in use encompass two features of written language: The length of the sentences, expressed as an average in a sample of a book's text; and, the complexity of the words used, also expressed as an ... average in a sample of the text" (p. 62-63, 1985).

Publishers have found that readability formulas are easy to apply and give a fairly good prediction of how difficult typical students will find a book. However, the

formulas cannot gauge the extremely important factors of clarity, coherence, organization, interest, literary quality, or subject matter adequacy of books.

As a child enters school his reading ability is quite immature. But as a student's reading ability matures, so should the content. Eventually, students will face texts where both the content and structure is unfamiliar to them. The researchers discuss issues with texts:

> "Many discussions of what my be wrong with textbooks, and what ought to be done to make them right, miss the mark. Pleas to control the 'readability' of textbooks often confuse symptoms with causes. Pleas for high-quality writing are vague. 'Stylish" wiring is not always compressive writing. Pleas to make textbooks 'harder' are not on the mark either. While students do make faster progress when texts offer some challenge, people prove everyday that it is possible to make unimportant information hard to understand" (p. 70-71, 1985).

Anderson et. al. conclude that texts need to contain adequate explanations that consider the skill level, knowledge, and reasoning power of the developing young readers that the text is targeted.

In schools, students are rarely given direct instruction. "Direct instruction in comprehension means explaining the steps in the thought process that gives birth to comprehension" (p. 72, 1985). The researchers determined that this is lacking in schools because many teachers do not know how to do this themselves. Instead, teachers focus on having students perform tasks such as summarizing, outlining, questioning and discussing texts. Worksheets are commonly used in the classroom but rarely require reading. Often students can get by with reading the instructions. Worksheets can be useful in the practice of

specific aspects of reading but most would need to be redesigned to accomplish this.

Primary age students spend on average seven to eight minutes a day engaged in independent reading; middle school students fair little better with on average fifteen minutes per day. In this study 90% of 5th grade students spent four minutes or less a day independently reading. The research found "that the amount of independent silent reading children do in school is significantly related to gains in reading achievement" (p. 76, 1985). The study found that students who spent leisure time reading was the best predictor of reading comprehension, vocabulary size, and gains in reading achievement between second and fifth grades.

Because of these findings, Anderson et. al. conclude that increasing students' reading should be a priority for teachers and parents. The report suggests, "two hours a week of independent reading should be expected by the time children are in the third or fourth grade"(p. 82, 1985). Reading is a major source of knowledge about sentence structure, text structure, literary forms and topics, vocabulary growth, and reading fluency. Schools that have been successful at promoting independent reading have access to reading material for their students, usually including a school and classroom library. A major problem across the nation is that many schools and classroom libraries are inadequate. Access to books is imperative promoting reading.

Teachers greatly influence their students' reading habits. Skilled teachers create varied opportunities throughout the day for language use. They also place

a premium on subject matter learning but do not sacrifice students' individual needs. Effective teachers will move through the material at a brisk pace but they do not sacrifice comprehension of the material. Maybe most importantly, effective teachers believe that every student can learn to read. One difficulty teachers face is the lack of material. Teachers will slow down the pace or even stop teaching curriculum because they cannot move on to next year's book and there are no more books at the level they are teaching.

Many schools and classroom use grouping for reading and other types of instruction. "In theory, ability grouping allows teachers to pace instruction at a more-nearly-optimum rate for children at every level than would be possible in whole class teaching. In fact, the evidence suggests that ability grouping may improve the achievement of the fast child but not the slow child"(p 89, 1985). Children in low groups will tend to do more reading aloud and less individual reading than students in higher ability groups. Students in low groups know that they are in the 'low' group and what that means. They often are less engaged in the lesson than their higher ability peers.

Having good intentions, teachers often believe that all students deserve equal time. However, Anderson et. al. recommend teachers put fewer students in lower groups and spend more time with these students. In this way, the lower students will receive more assistance. It is also recommended that to alleviate difficulties with ability grouping, teachers do not always group by ability and reassess groups periodically and move students around. The researchers conclude, "Both the quantity and quality of instruction for low groups need

improvement. Some of the problems with ability grouping can be alleviated by switching group assignments periodically, using criteria other than ability for group assignments, and, maybe, increasing the time devoted to whole class instruction"(p. 92, 1985).

Over the past thirty years the researchers have found the use of standardized testing to have dramatically increased. Many states now mandate testing for promotion. The authors find that standardized tests are not a valid assessment of students reading ability. They have established that a more valid assessment would be to have students,

> "read aloud unfamiliar but grade appropriate material with acceptable fluency; write satisfactory summaries of unfamiliar selections from grade appropriate social studies and science textbooks; explain the plots and motivations of the characters in unfamiliar, grade appropriate fiction, read extensively from books, magazines, and newspapers during leisure time." (p. 99, 1985)

One method of diagnosis the authors suggest is for a teacher to tape student oral reading three times throughout the year and report the diagnosis to the parents and school.

The authors of the study felt that testing had both its benefits and drawbacks. One of the biggest concerns is that teachers do not teach to the test. Tests need to be created to reflect the goals of reading instruction as closely as possible. The researches conclude, "Tests yield information of some value, but its significance should not be exaggerated out of proportion" (p. 101, 1985).

The final section of the report is dedicated to teachers of reading. The authors found that the teacher work force is becoming less educated. Fewer people are attracted to teaching because salaries are low, working conditions are

poor, and there is no career ladder in education. They also reported that teaching is a lonely profession as teachers often spend their days with little or no adult contact. Good teachers are needed if we are to improve reading instruction across America. At the elementary level more training is needed in reading as well as in other subjects. It is recommended that states adopt a five-year teacher preparedness program. And to limit the dearth of teachers, increase scholarships, loan forgiveness programs, and teacher salaries.

Teachers need to have continued access to new knowledge; so professional growth opportunities need to exist to allow continuous learning opportunities. "Vigorous instructional leadership, high expectations for children, a high priority for literacy, order and discipline, uninterrupted learning time, and a sense of community characterize effective schools" (p. 114, 1985). In the end, the authors of this national report conclude, "America will become a Nation of Readers when verified practices of the best teachers in the best schools can be introduced throughout the country" (p. 120, 1985).

Strategies for Reluctant Readers

According to Maguiness (1990) SSR programs have been making a comeback recently in New Zealand due concerns about reading standards. The International Association for the Evaluation of International Achievement found that New Zealand was slipping in the area of reading and that there was a growing disparity among good and poor readers. The IEA literary survey linked voluntary reading to reading success and found that in New Zealand there was a decline in students reading voluntarily. Western Springs College of Auckland did

a separate study and came to the same conclusions of the IEA literacy survey. Maguiness found, "Reading was identified as a significant barrier to learning and in 1997 staff agreed to begin sustained silent reading in conjunction with a peer reading program for those students who needed reading support " (p. 2, 1990).

Maguiness further explains that sustained silent reading, it was hoped, would benefit those students who could read but chose not to. SSR would provide students the time and place to read and would address the growing gap in achievement between readers and reluctant readers. Researchers, such as Elley (1996), have provided the theoretical base for SSR. "We learn to read by reading" (Maguiness, 1990, p. 3). Silent reading provides students with new vocabulary, improves comprehension and knowledge about texts. "Lymen Hunt (cited Sadowski) described the characteristics of the program:

- role modeling of reading behavior by the teacher
- silence
- self-selected material
- no writing about the activity
- emphasis on reading for pleasure" (Maguiness p. 3, 1990)

Maguiness found teachers were very supportive of program after one year while students were not quite as positive. Most students did not feel it was helping their reading. Seniors especially had negative remarks and some resented the reading time. However, the library did have an increase in borrowing.

By year two or the Maguiness study teachers were frustrated because they felt like they were spending too much time managing and not enough

modeling. Teachers also found that students were not bringing their own material and many were unwilling to read. The school felt there was disconnect with what was actually occurring and the purpose of sustained silent reading. The school felt they needed to measure if sustained silent reading was a productive use of time or just a waste of time.

The researcher interviewed a small group from the school. The group included students that always read, students who sometimes read, and nonreaders. All three groups seemed to understand the concept behind SSR. The readers in the study read for more than ten minutes during SSR, brought their own book, read at home, and claimed that teacher modeling had no effect. The research found that reluctant readers, some who were considered good readers because of their testing scores, blamed their lack of reading on outside forces. The reluctant readers often did not bring a book, overestimated time spent of reading outside of the classroom, and were unsure about the effect of teacher modeling.

The readers were intrinsically motivated to read. The reluctant readers on the other hand showed they were externally motivated. Some things the reluctant readers asked for were more teacher input of novel choice, consequences for not reading or talking and a quieter environment.

Because of this study, Western Springs College, adapted their SSR program. They felt that it was important to continue to provide students with time for SSR but also allowed that time to be used for visits to the library, book

sharing sessions, and book promotions. The new model is more difficult for teachers and as a result the school has set up a support system.

Developing Reading and Writing

Sustained silent reading has many names. Some call it SSR for short, others call it DEAR (Drop Everything and Read), or DIRT (Daily Independent Reading Time) (Hopkins, 1997) Whatever a teacher or school calls it the program is basically the same. Hopkins defines SSR as a period of time set aside by the teacher to have students participate in independent reading. The time is usually anywhere between ten to thirty minutes depending on grade level and reading ability.

There are many purposes to SSR:

- "Most school reading is assigned reading. SSR offers students an opportunity to read material of their own choice.
- During SSR time, many students learn that they can use their word attack skills to figure out new words -- on their own!
- SSR can build students' confidence in their abilities to work through reading trouble spots.
- Many studies of whole-class groups and of select groups of unmotivated readers show that SSR can result in students wanting to read more.
- The amount of time that students spend reading independently outside of school often increases as a result of SSR, parents report. Often children ask for books to read at home.

- SSR can be one more element in a reading program aimed at demonstrating the joy that reading can bring and developing lifelong readers and learners." (Hopkins, p. 1, 1997)

Hopkins states that there has been much to support the practice of silent reading in recent research.

According to Hopkins, silent reading takes different forms in different schools. In some schools the entire school will stop what they are doing and all read independently at the same time. In other schools teachers where SSR may not be supported school wide, teachers incorporated SSR into their classroom program. Ultimately, the thrust of SSR programs is for students to see the pleasure reading is valuable.

In some classrooms Hopkins maintains students read from a pre-selected list of books to read during SSR but the in majority of classrooms, students can freely choose what to read. In some classrooms, SSR is private time and students do not have to report on what they have read. It appears that the majority of programs have some form of follow-up activity including, journals, logs, small group discussions, whole class discussions, pair reading, and dialogue journals.

Hopkins is adamant the teacher should act as a role model during SSR. It is not a time for the teacher to be grading or preparing tomorrow's lesson. Teachers should be "modeling a lifelong love of reading" (Hopkins, p. 3, 1997). If teachers have students participate in follow-up activities, then the teacher should do this as well. Teachers need to demonstrate how to discuss and question a

book. Depending on the follow up activity, teachers may also be demonstrating good writing habits as well (Hopkins, 1997).

Summary of Major Themes

Practice

> "Sustained silent reading (SSR), often referred to as normal and/or natural reading, is the process of reading for an uninterrupted period of time. SSR, in its most widespread application, is simple recreational reading wherein the reader reads primarily for enjoyment and/or to gain information" (Dwyer & West, 1994).

Sustained Silent Reading is a program to encourage students to read and see the importance of reading. The program in its original form called for the entire school community to stop what they are doing and pick up a book for a given period of time. This includes all members of the school community: students, teachers, administrators, support staff, cafeteria workers, and custodians. Reading material choice is left up to the individual reader, but readers are expected to choose material of value. There is no evaluation made on comprehension of reading material. If it is impossible for the entire school setting to read at the same time, then it is recommended that SSR take place in the classroom with the teacher to indicate the importance of reading (Marlowe, 2001).

The need to have an SSR program grew out of students lack of reading and reading abilities (Anderson et. al. 1985). Allington (2002) found that in typical elementary classrooms, students spent as little as ten percent of their day reading. In some fifth grade classrooms, 90% of the students were found to spend less that four minutes or less of their school day reading (Anderson, et all,

1985). Many elementary classrooms were found to have only twenty minutes of reading per school day (Knapp, 1995 as cited in Allington, 2002). In 1985 the national report, "Becoming a Nation of Readers: The Report of the Commission on Reading" suggested participation in independent reading in the classroom, such as SSR, would help to increase students knowledge and produce significant gains in reading achievement (Anderson, et all, 1985).

Organizational Practice

While SSR was designed to provide students with free choice as to what they read, many teachers have steered away from this practice. Nagy, Campenni and Shaw (2000) found that in a study of 96 teachers, 69% restricted what students read in some fashion. Atwell (1987) required her students to read a book: no magazines or newspapers. This practice was found to be useful by both Atwell (1987) and Burden (1994) as a way to engage students in reading material that they may not have otherwise chosen. They found that when students read magazines or newspapers they did what many of us do, scan the headlines or photographs rather than actually read the articles. Students' literature selections tended to fit their style and ability, and as they became stronger readers, their reading material became more mature.

Sustained Silent Reading programs differ on the amount of time students spend reading independently. Dwyer and West (1994) found that teachers tend to give less proficient readers shorter amount of time, with the time increasing as students became more adept at reading. Therefore, it makes sense that most elementary SSR programs looked at range in length from five to twenty minutes

and the SSR times typically lasted longer in both middle and high school programs.

Evaluation Methods of SSR

According to Hopkins (1997) and Nagy, Campenni and Shaw (2000) more than 50% of teachers do some type of evaluation of Sustained Silent Reading time even though it is against the original ideas SSR set forth. Types of evaluation include journal writing, reports, discussions, tests, quizzes, and conferences. Many teachers feel that their students would not read without receiving a reward. At the elementary level rewards can be varied, but at the middle and high school levels the reward is usually a grade that the students receive for doing some task in relationship with their recreational reading book.

Advantages of SSR

"SSR is instrumental in learning to read, reading to learn, an in facilitating life long learning" (Sustained Silent Reading, N.D).

The advantages of student participation in a Sustained Silent Reading program are many:

- *Most school reading is assigned reading. SSR offers students an opportunity to read material of their own choice.*
- *During SSR time, many students learn that they can use their word attack skills to figure out new words -- on their own!*
- *SSR can build students' confidence in their abilities to work through reading trouble spots.*
- *Many studies of whole-class groups and of select groups of*

unmotivated readers show that SSR can result in students wanting to read more.

- *The amount of time that students spend reading independently outside of school often increases as a result of SSR, parents report. Often children ask for books to read at home.* (Hopkins, 1997)

In her study of recreational reading in a high school basic senior English class Burden (1994) found that through the use of SSR in the classroom students did increase recreational reading time and willingness to read. Burden also found that students increased their visits to the library to seek out new books, and most students had a growth in their self-confidence. While Burden found that her students were reading more, practicing SSR has been shown to actually increase reading rate even among college age students, implying that students not only just read more because of participation in an SSR program but they also read faster (Dwyer & West, 1994).

Warwick (1992) found that students who voluntarily read were stronger readers and had higher achievement scores in the United States than students who did not volunteer to read on their own time. "Reading is the only way, the only way we become good readers, develop a good writing style, an adequate vocabulary, advanced grammar, and the only way we become good spellers" (Krashen, 1993 as cited in Sustained Silent Reading, N.D.).

Disadvantages of SSR

Probably the most notable drawback to SSR is that many reluctant readers do not utilize this time to actually read, especially if the SSR program is not graded. Maguiness (1999) found that many reluctant readers blamed their lack of reading on outside forces rather than taking responsibility for their own learning and reading. While looking at his high school classes, Meyers (1998) established that only 60% of his high school students reported reading most of the time during the time allotted for SSR. Buden (1994) discovered that many of her reluctant readers lacked the motivation to read, and by the end of the study, still held negative attitudes towards reading.

Another disadvantage to SSR is that many teachers find it difficult to manage. Teachers feel that they must give grades otherwise their students will not participate which is in agreement with the previous findings (Burden, 1994, Hopkins, 1997, Nagy, Campenni & Shaw, 2000). By the end of the second year of the Maguiness study (1999), teachers were very frustrated with their SSR program because they felt as if they were spending too much time managing the program and not enough time modeling good reading techniques for their students.

In many of the programs studied, students needed time to adjust to the SSR program. In the beginning, students agreed that reading was an important practice but many did not enjoy being forced to read. One student summed up his thoughts on reading: "Reading is a big thing. I think it should be pushed. As

much as I dislike it at times it needs to be there for people like me who don't read at all very much at home" (Maguiness, 1999).

Extension of the Literature

The research available on the practice of sustained silent reading in the classroom is extensive. However, much of the research has primarily focused on reading in the elementary grade levels. The studies that extend to the upper grade levels are often limited to middle school age students and even more common, pertains solely to poor readers.

This study will extend the current literature because it will focus on a sub group that is not commonly looked at in conjunction with the effects of sustained silent reading. This study will look at a heterogeneous group of ninth grade students in an affluent suburban high school. While some of these students have been identified as struggling readers, they are not the majority. Therefore, this study wishes to extend the scope of studies on sustained silent reading.

Methods

Sample and Site

The participants in this study are 79 ninth grade students in college preparatory English classes in an affluent suburb of the East Bay region of the San Francisco Bay Area of California. Together the students make up four sections of ninth grade English. All students share the same English teacher in common.

Access and Permissions

Permission to include the students was granted by the school principal. As the study focused on an ongoing classroom practice, parent permission slips did not need to be gathered. The students were accessible to the researcher as the participants in the study were her ninth grade students throughout the 2002-2003 school year.

Data Gathering Strategies

Data was gathered using a pre and post questionnaire that focused on students' participation in sustained silent reading, recreational reading habits, and student attitudes towards recreational reading. The researcher developed five focus questions to be answered:

1. Does silent reading help to increase students' enjoyment of reading?
2. Does silent reading increase student reading at home?
3. What are students' attitudes towards silent reading and do they change throughout the year?
4. Do students read during silent reading time?
5. Does SSR in English class influence recreational reading in other classes (do students take out their recreational reading books to fill time in other classes)?

The pre and post data was then compared to observe any change in responses and thus an overall change in habits and/or attitudes towards recreational reading. Seventy-eight students took the pretest due to absences. The pretest was given on January 28, 2003 the first day of the second semester of the 2002-

2003 school year. At the time of the pretest, participants had been participating in Sustained Silent Reading every Monday of class since September. The post-test was given on Thursday, March 27th the second to the last day in the third quarter. The post-test was given to 79 students, one more than the pretest. The post-test data was disaggregated according to sex to further interpret the data. The entire study period extended over the course of one quarter of the school year, approximately a two-month period.

Data Analysis Approach

The pre and post data was looked at first individually and then against each other to determine if the findings changed over time. At the conclusion of the second survey, students were welcomed to write comments about their thoughts on sustained silent reading that may not have been shown through a multiple choice type survey. Many students commented both for and against the practice of sustained silent reading. After analyzing data from the first questionnaire, the researcher decided to disaggregate the data on the second survey by sex to further understand differences to student responses.

Ethical Standards

This study adheres to Ethical Standards in Human Subjects Research of the American Psychological Association (APA, 2001). Additionally, the project was reviewed and approved by the Dominican University of California Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects.

Findings

1. *Does silent reading help to increase students' enjoyment of reading?*

Eighty-two percent of students responded that they are glad they get to do sustained silent reading in class in the March survey while that number dropped slightly to 79% in the April questionnaire. A little more than two-thirds of the students in both surveys feel that SSR has introduced them to genres that they may not have otherwise read. For pleasure 67% of the students enjoy reading novels and nearly 80% enjoy reading magazines according to the first survey. However, the second survey identified a drop in these numbers with only 58% identifying novels and 70% magazines for pleasure reading materials. Only 6 of the respondents said they would prefer to not read at all in the first questionnaire and 8 (6 boys and 2 girls) agreed that they would prefer not to read in the second survey. As Figure 1 and 2 indicate below, students felt that they did increase the number of books they read throughout the time of the study.

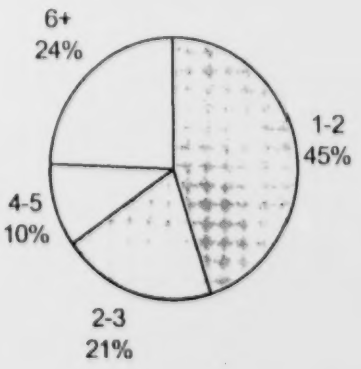

Figure 1. Books Read for Pleasure, Questionnaire 1

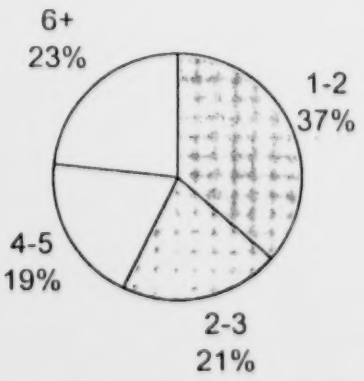

Figure 2. Books Read for Pleasure, Questionnaire 2

Interestingly, 75% of the students responded that they read books that they want at home. When asked if students discussed books with their parents

48% responded yes while 40% responded no in the first questionnaire, while in the second questionnaire 46% responded yes and 36% responded no. Later in the questionnaire students were asked if they discussed books with both their siblings and parents and the positive response grew 10% in both questionnaires. Students responded almost equally in the March questionnaire when asked if they discuss books with their friends with only 3% more agreeing that they do discuss reading with friends than not. But in the April questionnaire 10% more students said they discussed books with their friends than not. Twenty six percent of the males responded that they do not discuss books with friends while only 8% of the females stated the same. Twice as many students said they read for pleasure when not in school in questionnaire one, while the number increased to 60% of the participants in the second survey responding they read for pleasure at home and 26% saying they did not.

2. *Does silent reading increase student reading at home?*

As the last statement from the previous section stated students said they read for pleasure when not in school. Also, an overwhelming 75% of students agreed that they read books that they want to at home. As figure 3 demonstrates, the majority of students prefer to read magazines when given the choice of what to read. Almost 60% of the students read novels for pleasure and 18% more girls said they read novels for pleasure over the boys.

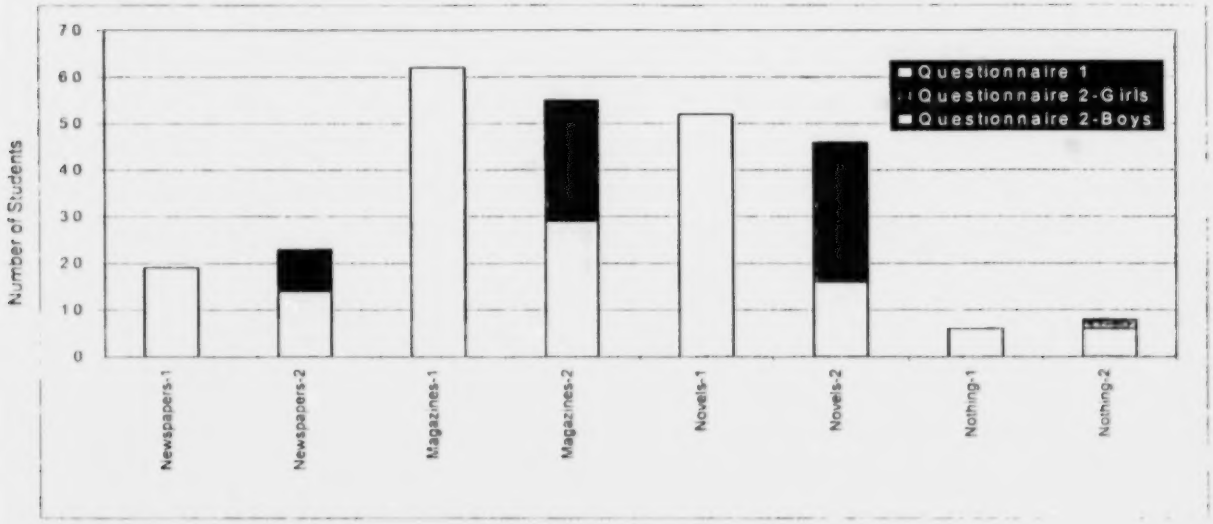

Figure 3. Types of Recreational Reading

Students are involved with numerous activities after school that takes priority over reading for pleasure. After school activities include: sports (42%), watching television (14%), playing or hanging out with friends (21%), doing homework (30%), and reading (1%). These percentages stayed consistent with both questionnaires with the exception of reading. In the second survey, reading rose to 5% of students saying they read after school. Twenty-seven percent of the respondents said they spend no time reading for pleasure at home in questionnaire 1 and this decreased to 21% in questionnaire 2 (15% boys, 6% girls); 39% and 35% respectively, spend less than thirty minutes; 27% and 25% respectively spend between half an hour to an hour; 8% and 10% spend more than an hour reading for pleasure at home; and while no students in questionnaire 1 said they spent more than an hour and a half a day, in questionnaire 2, 9% (2 boys and 5 girls) said they engage in reading for that period of time.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Almost 60% of the respondents in questionnaire 1 believe they will read for pleasure over the summer vacation, but the number decreased in the March survey to just about 50%. The amount of respondents unsure remained equal at 32%-33%. Eight students in survey 1 say they will definitely not read for pleasure over summer break and the number increased to 15 students in the second questionnaire.

3. What are students' attitudes towards silent reading and do they change throughout the year?

Participants in the study overwhelmingly stated they were glad that they participated in Sustained Silent Reading in class each week with only 19% (10 boys and 5 girls) of the students feeling otherwise. Sixty-one percent of the respondents said that they enjoyed reading in questionnaire 1 and this number increased to 77% of the respondents in questionnaire 2, 17% disagreed in survey 1 while 14% (12% boys and 2% girls) disagreed in survey 2, and 22% were undecided in the February survey while only 10% were undecided in the March one. Seventy percent of the participants felt that SSR had value while only 11% did not agree and this number grew to 18% in the second survey. Three-fourths of the students surveyed felt SSR was a good educational practice.

The fact that students complete reading projects on their SSR book made more than 50% of the students feel negatively towards SSR in survey one and 41% in the post-questionnaire, even though they repeatedly supported SSR in other questions. Also 3 times more boys than girls felt negatively towards reading projects. Another drawback to SSR according to 72% in the February questionnaire and 79% in the March questionnaire is that students do not always

get to choose the genre they have to read. Having this choose, the participants say they would enjoy SSR more.

The response was almost equal when asked if students read more for pleasure this year with 37% saying yes and 35% saying no in the pre-questionnaire but in the post-questionnaire 46% said they read more and 27% said they did not. Fifty percent of the students felt that SSR directly contributed to them reading more in survey 1 and this rose to 55% in the second survey. Sixty-eight percent of the respondents felt that practicing in Sustained Silent Reading has exposed to books that they may not have otherwise chosen.

4. Do students read during silent reading time?

Students overwhelmingly stated that yes, they do indeed read during the provided silent reading time. Almost twice as many students agreed that one of the main motivating factors for their reading was that they received a grade for silent reading. Also, 50 of the participants believe that they read for the entire period while 25 said they did not. In the post-questionnaire this increased to 60 of the students feeling that they read the entire period while 19 said they did not. Figure 4 shows a further breakdown of how much time students believe they spend reading.

					Post survey breakdown	
Minutes	pre test	% of respondents	post test	% of respondents	% Boys	% Girls
10	3	4	0	0	0	0
20	5	7	6	8	5	3
30	18	26	17	22	12	10
40	44	63	55	71	33	37

Figure 4. Breakdown of How Much Time Students Spend Reading

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Even though most students responded that they read more than 40 minutes during SSR, in an earlier question regarding if it is difficult to read the entire period 54% responded that is difficult in the first survey while only 34% found it difficult at the time of the second survey. In response to the statement, 'I get easily distracted during SSR,' 7% more students disagreed than agreed in both questionnaires.

5. *Does SSR in English class influence recreational reading in other classes (do students pull out their rec. reading books to fill time)?*

In attempting to answer the question of whether or not participating in SSR influences recreation reading in other classes the researcher found some inconsistency in participants pretest answers. In responding to the statement 'When I am finished with an assignment in class, I may take out my SSR book and read to fill the time,' 24 students agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and 34 students either disagreed or strongly disagreed. While there is not a strong majority, more students responded that they do not take their silent reading book out when they are finished with an assignment. Interestingly, later in the questionnaire students were asked if they have read their SSR book in any class outside of their English class. An overwhelming 70% of the participants responded that yes they had read their SSR book in another class.

In the post-questionnaire 37 respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they may take out their SSR book in another class, an increase of 13 students. The number of students that disagreed with this statement decreased from 34 students in survey 1 to 26 in survey 2. Oddly, the number of students that said they had read their SSR book in another class decreased to just 52%.

When further probed about why they read their SSR book in classes other than English, 60% of the participants said they read because they completed the assignment or test. Thirty-six percent of students said they read in other classes because they were bored and 35 read because they were given free time by the teacher. Only 5 respondents, or 6%, said they read because they were uninterested in the lecture or assignment. In the post-questionnaire, each of these percentages decreased slightly with the exception of students reading in other classes because they were uninterested in the lecture or assignment which increased by 1 student.

Participants felt their teachers in other subject areas did not mind the students reading in their classrooms. The majority of students responded that their teachers either encouraged or did not seem to notice the students were reading. Eight participants claimed that their teachers are bothered when the participants read their SSR book within the teacher's classroom. This number decreased by 3 students in the second questionnaire. Seventeen participants (21%) said that they have never read their SSR book in a course other than English in the first questionnaire and in the second, this number increased to 21 (26%) respondents.

Discussion

In attempting to answer the bigger question of what are the effects of weekly, Sustained Silent Reading time on recreational reading habits and attitudes in a 9th Grade English Class the researcher developed 5 questions to focus the questionnaire. These questions were

1. Does silent reading help to increase students' enjoyment of reading?
2. Does silent reading increase student reading at home?
3. What are students' attitudes towards silent reading and do they change throughout the year?
4. Do students read during silent reading time?
5. Does SSR in English class influence recreational reading in other classes (do students take out their recreational reading books to fill time in other classes)?

The questionnaire developed from these questions attempted to acquire specific answers from the students to help better understand their interactions with sustained silent reading. After giving the questionnaire two times, the researcher feels that some of the students may have had a difficult time interpreting some of the questions which may be the reason that some questions were left unanswered and to other questions students gave more than one response, discounting both responses.

Overall, students overwhelmingly said they were glad to do SSR in class. Less than 20% of the students felt negatively towards SSR. Twice the number of boys disliked SSR compared to that of girls. The researcher thinks that this could be due to the fact that many boys seem to have a hard time sitting for long periods of time focusing on one thing. This may also be due to the age of the participants—many freshman boys are a little bit behind the females in the maturing process. The number of students who said they enjoy reading in the second survey was just over ¾ of the students. This was much higher than the

first survey and could be because students were given two more months of reading encouragement through SSR. Over 70% of the students felt that SSR was both valuable and a good educational practice. The researcher believes that this is due to two factors: 1) Their teacher makes them do it once a week and many of them have participated in SSR in other classrooms throughout their educational experience; 2) they see that their teacher values SSR enough to research it for her Masters thesis. When students see that their teacher, the one they expect to be an expert on a particular subject, values something such as reading, they in turn see it as important.

In written comments it is evident that students like and or dislike SSR for various reasons. Casey, a ninth grade boy says, "I like SSR because it is my down time during the day. There is no yelling, or testing, just enjoying my book and relaxing." Clearly Casey enjoys the quiet time that SSR allows him in the afternoon to sit and read his book. A high achieving student active in student government and athletics, Hannah writes about SSR: "Since I have actually been forced to sit and read, I have learned to really get into a book so it makes me make more time to read." Without realizing it, Hannah has come across one of the tenets of SSR: if a student is given the opportunity to read in class, they will read more on their own time.

But not all students enjoy the time provided each week for them during the SSR period. Zach, a ninth grader just outside of the norm writes, "reading is good until it is viciously imposed by the school." Zach obviously does not like to have SSR time forced on him each week. A female student, Carrie, has a completely

different and surprising reason for not enjoying SSR: "I don't like SSR because I like the talking and discussing that we have in this class and when we read, there is no talking, discussing, or interaction." While her response is positive because she clearly enjoys the class, she feels that SSR does not engage her the way that the rest of the class activities do. Brad, another student, admits to not doing much reading during the allotted reading period. However, Brad says he likes SSR although it is not for the same reasons the teacher includes it as part of the curriculum: "The only reason I like SSR is because it gives you time to chill at the end of the day or sleep in the morning. SSR would be better if we could read the newspaper or magazines. Reading is reading after all." Brad's comment sums up an important point made by many students throughout the questionnaires; they would prefer to have complete control to choose their own material to read during SSR and not be limited to novels. Ashley says, "I think SSR is a valuable thing but like it better when we get to choose our own novel and read any genre."

Many students also do not enjoy doing reading projects on their SSR novel. In the first survey just over 50% said they did not like doing them, while in the second survey the number dropped to 40%. While there is no evidence in the survey to indicate why there would be such a decrease, the researcher thinks it could be due to the varied types of projects that were completed immediately before the two surveys were administered. Many students thought the project due towards the end of the third quarter, near the time of the second questionnaire, was the easiest and best project they had been assigned thus far in the year. Of note is also the fact that 3 times more boys than girls did not like

doing projects on the SSR books. The researcher does not know why this would be but thinks studying the difference between the male and female reactions to reading might be valuable.

More than 50% of students enjoy reading both magazines and novels for pleasure. The numbers did drop in the second survey but remain relatively high. However, it is inconclusive if SSR has any effect on whether or not students enjoy reading these materials. It does appear from student responses that SSR increases the number of books a student reads throughout the year. On average 47% of the students discuss their SSR books with their parents. This was also supported in casual conversation with the researcher when numerous students explained that one of the main factors in choosing a book was parent recommendation. Female students appear more likely to discuss books with their friends than male students. The researcher believes this may be because it is more socially acceptable for females to engage in conversations about their books while boys at this age often consider discussing books 'un-cool'.

More than 50% of students say they read for pleasure when not in school. This number increased to 60% of respondents in the second survey indicating that more students read outside of class as the year progressed and the students continue to engage in SSR each week. Steven said about SSR, "I enjoy SSR because it has showed me that books may be boring at the beginning but they get better as you go. I have started to read more in my free time because of SSR." Steven's response is exactly why many teachers include SSR as a part of their curriculum. He, like many teenagers today, have trouble showing patience

with novels, but when encouraged to continue reading them, find out that there might be something worth reading in all those pages of words.

With approximately three-fourths of students in both the pre and post questionnaire agreeing that they read books that they want to at home and then only 60% saying they read for pleasure at home, there is some inconsistency in the student responses. Regardless, the majority of students do read at home. As stated previously, students enjoy reading both magazines and novels at home. However, it is inconclusive from this study if engaging in SSR increased the amount that students read at home.

Students are extremely busy after school with many different activities demanding their time. However, over time there was a four percent increase in the number of students that said one of their after school activities was reading. Alex said this of SSR, "It made me like one author more and made me want to read their other books." It is not clear from Alex's response if he does read those 'other books' on his own time, but it is evident that his exposure during SSR has opened up new reading material to him. The number of students that said they spent no time reading for pleasure at home decreased by 6% in the second survey. Surprisingly, the majority of respondents not reading at home were boys consisting of almost 3 times that of girls. To know why boys tend to read less at home than girls is beyond the scope of this study.

One of the questions on the survey asked students if they thought they would read over summer vacation. In the first survey the majority of the students felt that they would read over summer. However, by the second survey, 2 months

later, only 50% of the students felt they would read over summer vacation. The researcher thinks this could be due to several factors. The second survey was given the day before spring break and many students could only think of getting out of school and wanting to read appears too much like a school activity. Another reason could be that with summer only 9 weeks away, students are more familiar with their summer plans. The fact that 50% still thought they would read and another 33% were unsure is still a favorable finding.

Students in both the pre and post questionnaire indicated that they read for the majority of the time allotted for SSR. There was an increase of about 15% of the students saying they read for the entire period in the second survey. It appears that the more the students practice SSR the easier it becomes to do it for the fixed time period. However, reading for an entire 50 minutes is not easy for all students. Carl states, "Silent reading is fun, but it gets boring sometimes, I can't last the whole period reading, unless I'm interested in the book." A student that has been on and off medication for ADHD throughout the year says, "I like SSR, but it's really hard to stay focused on the book for 55 minutes." Clearly, it is difficult for some students to stay motivated to read for the entire period, but when asked if they would prefer to read twice a week for shorter periods of time, almost twice as many students said no, they like SSR the way it is. Interestingly, the two previous students prefaced their troubles with a positive comment about SSR. So even though they dislike some parts of SSR, from their comments it is evident they like SSR as well.

In attempting to find out if students read for pleasure while in classes outside of their English class, there was some inconsistency in student responses. However, it is evident that many students do or have read for pleasure in their other classes. It also appears that more students have done this as the year has progressed. It seems that some students are reading for pleasure when they are finished an assignment or are given free time but they are in the minority. Had the study allowed for more time between the two questionnaires, the researcher believes she would find a clearer pattern and more consistency in student responses.

More than 50% of the students sampled directly contributed SSR to their increase in reading this year. While students like to have free choice of genre, 68% said SSR exposed them to new genres that they may not have chosen on their own. Clearly, the majority of students feel that SSR is helping them to read more than if they were left to their own devices. Natalia, who is always occupied by one sport or another, says, "I really enjoy SSR during class because it gives me time to be in silence and read a book, when I don't have time or a motivation out of class. I look forward to SSR reading on the days we have it because it relaxes me after a hard day and makes me a little more positive and open."

Limitations

The researcher believes that had this study taken place over a greater period of time the results would be stronger and more conclusive. While this study made an attempt to answer what effects SSR had on the habits and attitudes of ninth graders, it did a much better job of assessing attitudes than it

did habits. The researcher believes this is because measuring a habit is much more difficult than measuring an attitude. Also, habits are generally created over longer periods of time than just two months. Had this study began at the start of the year and then concluded at the end of the school year, ten months later, the data would probably do a better job of accurately quantifying student habits.

Another limitation of the study is the fact that the data was not disaggregated by sex in both studies. The discrepancies between the male and female answers in the second survey could not be compared against like data. In the responses where there was a significant disagreement between sexes, it would be worth studying to understand the reasons behind the different responses.

Overall Significance of Study

Regardless of the drawbacks, the researcher found that these students, for the most, part do enjoy the practice of sustained silent reading. The students have helped the researcher answer a personal question of whether or not this should be a part of her curriculum. It appears that the practice of Sustained Silent Reading works for the majority of the ninth grade students in this study, and as a result of this study, the researcher feels justified for including SSR in her curriculum. The practice of reading does seem to encourage reading which is one of the overall purposes of SSR. Rachel's response sums it up: "I think SSR encourages me to read more and reminds me that I love to read."

References

Allington, Richard L., (2002) The Six Ts of Effective Elementary Literacy Instruction. [online] http://www.readinrockets.org (*Article originally published June 2002 issue of Phi Delta Kappan as "What I've Learned About Effective Reading Instruction From a Decade of Studying Exemplary Elementary Classroom Teachers.")*

Anderson, Richard C., Hiebert, E. H., Scott, J.A. & Wilkinson, I.A.C. (1985). *Becoming a Nation of Readers: The Report of the Commission on Reading*. Champaign, IL. Center for the Study of Reading; Washington D.C.: National Institute of Education.

Atwell, N. (1987). In The Middle: Writing, Reading, and Learning with Adolescents Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook.

The Center for the Book Library of Congress. (1997). "Building A Nation of Readers" Washington D.C. (ED 414562).

Burden, M. (1994). Using Young Adult Literature to promote Recreational Reading in a Senior Basic English Class. (ED 376497).

Dwyer, E. and West, R. (1994). Effects of Sustained Silent Reading on Reading Rate among College Students. (ED 382 924).

Ellley, W. (1992). How in the world do student's read—IEA study of reading Literacy. (ED 360613).

Hopkins, G. (1997). 'Sustained Silent Reading' Helps Develop Independent Readers (and Writers). Education World [online]. (http://www.education-world.com).

Los Angeles Unified School District Office of Instructional Media. Sustained Silent Reading [pamphlet]. N.D. www.lausd.k12.ca.us/lausd/offices/instruct/itb/libserv/Ssr.pdf

Maguiness, C. (1999-00-00). Show Us How: A School-Wide Program for Reluctant Readers. Paper presented at the Biennial Conference of the International Federation for the Teaching of English. Warwick, England, UK.

Marlowe, Ediger. (2001). Success in the Reading Curriculum. (ED 456411).

Meyers, R. (1998-04-02). Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading. Long Beach, CA. (ED 418379).

Nagy, N. M. and Campenni, E. C. and Shaw, J. N. (2000). A Survey of Sustained Silent Reading Practices in Seventh-Grade Classrooms. Newark, DE. International Reading Association [online]. http://www.readingonline.org (ED418379).

Appendices

Appendix A

SSR Student Questionnaire

Using the following scale to respond to the following statements.
A. Strongly agree
B. agree
C. undecided
D. disagree
E. strongly disagree

1. I enjoy reading.
2. I read books that I want to at home.
3. I talk about books with my parents.
4. I talk about books with my friends.
5. I choose to read for pleasure when I am not in school.
6. When I am finished with an assignment in class, I may take out my SSR book and read to fill the time.
7. I like having SSR time in my English class each week.
8. It is hard to read for the entire period during SSR.
9. Silent reading is a good educational practice.
10. I get easily distracted during SSR.
11. I have started reading more for pleasure this year.
12. I read more than I would normally because of SSR this year.
13. I would like SSR more if I was free to choose any genre of book that I wanted.
14. I always come prepared to read during SSR.
15. I see value in SSR.
16. I think it is important that the teacher reads during SSR.
17. I read during SSR because I know it counts for a grade.
18. Doing Outside Reading Projects on my SSR book makes me dislike SSR.
19. I would like SSR more if we read two times a week for shorter periods of time rather than for one entire period.
20. I have discussed my SSR book with my parents or siblings.

21. I read for the entire time during silent reading each week.

A. Yes
B. No

22. I estimate that I read about _____ of the time during SSR.
    A. 10 minutes
    B. 20 minutes
    C. 30 minutes
    D. 40 minutes

23. What is the average amount of time you spend reading for pleasure at home?
    A. None
    B. Less than 30 minutes a day
    C. Between 30 to 60 minutes a day
    D. Between an hour to an hour and a half a day
    E. More than an hour and a half a day

24. Which of the following activities are you involved in the most after school?
    A. Sports
    B. Watching T.V.
    C. Reading
    D. Playing or hanging out with friends
    E. Doing homework for school

25. How many books have you read for pleasure this year?
    A. 1-2
    B. 2-3
    C. 4-5
    D. 6+

26. I have read my SSR book in classes other than English.
    A. Yes
    B. No

27. I have read my SSR book in other classes because— (darken the circle of all that apply)
    A. I was finished with the assignment or test.
    B. I was bored.

C. We had free time.
D. I was uninterested in the lecture/assignment.
E. I never read in my other classes.

28.My other teachers _____ when I read my SSR book in their class.

A. Encourage me to read
B. Don't seem to notice
C. Are bothered
D. I have never read in another class, so this does not apply to me.

29. My idea of reading for pleasure is reading ... (mark all that apply).
A. newspapers
B. magazines
C. novels
D. not reading at all

30.I will read books for pleasure over summer vacation.
A. Yes
B. No
C. I'm not sure.

31. I think SSR has introduced my to books that I may not have picked out on my own.
A. Yes
B. No

32. I'm glad that we do SSR in class.
A. Yes
B. No

Appendix B

Sustained Silent Reading pamphlet

Will attach a copy of the LA Unified School District handout (It is in the works cited)

CS 512 322

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
(OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

ERIC
Educational Resources Information Center

Reproduction Release

(Specific Document)

I. DOCUMENT IDENTIFICATION:

Title: The Effects of Weekly Sustained Silent Reading Time on Recreational Reading Habits and Attitudes in a 9th grade English Class	
Author(s): Mary C. Kirby	
Corporate Source: Dominican University of California	Publication Date: May 2003

II. REPRODUCTION RELEASE:

In order to disseminate as widely as possible timely and significant materials of interest to the educational community, documents announced in the monthly abstract journal of the ERIC system, Resources in Education (RIE), are usually made available to users in microfiche, reproduced paper copy, and electronic media, and sold through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). Credit is given to the source of each document, and, if reproduction release is granted, one of the following notices is affixed to the document.

If permission is granted to reproduce and disseminate the identified document, please CHECK ONE of the following three options and sign in the indicated space following.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 1 documents	The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2A documents	The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2B documents
PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY SAMPLE TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)	PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE, AND IN ELECTRONIC MEDIA FOR ERIC COLLECTION SUBSCRIBERS ONLY, HAS BEEN GRANTED BY SAMPLE TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)	PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY SAMPLE TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
Level 1	**Level 2A**	**Level 2B**
↑ ☒	↑ ☐	↑ ☐
Check here for Level 1 release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche or other ERIC archival media (e.g. electronic) *and* paper copy.	Check here for Level 2A release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche and in electronic media for ERIC archival collection subscribers only	Check here for Level 2B release, permitting reproductio and dissemination in microfiche only
Documents will be processed as indicated provided reproduction quality permits. If permission to reproduce is granted, but no box is checked, documents will be processed at Level 1.		

I hereby grant to the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) nonexclusive permission to reproduce and disseminate this document as indicated above. Reproduction from the ERIC microfiche, or electronic media by persons other than ERIC employees and its system contractors requires permission from the copyright holder. Exception is made for non-profit reproduction by libraries and other service agencies to satisfy information needs of educators in response to discrete inquiries.

Signature: Mary C Kirby	Printed Name/Position/Title: Mary C. Kirby / teacher	
Organization/Address: 1065 Warfield Ave. Oakland, CA 94610	Telephone: (510) 465-0947	Fax:
	E-mail Address: MCScott55@yahoo.com	Date: 5/7/03

III. DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY INFORMATION (FROM NON-ERIC SOURCE):

If permission to reproduce is not granted to ERIC, or, if you wish ERIC to cite the availability of the document from another source, please provide the following information regarding the availability of the document. (ERIC will not announce a document unless it is publicly available, and a dependable source can be specified. Contributors should also be aware that ERIC selection criteria are significantly more stringent for documents that cannot be made available through EDRS.)

Publisher/Distributor:
Address:
Price:

IV. REFERRAL OF ERIC TO COPYRIGHT/REPRODUCTION RIGHTS HOLDER:

If the right to grant this reproduction release is held by someone other than the addressee, please provide the appropriate name and address:

Name:
Address:

V. WHERE TO SEND THIS FORM:

Send this form to the following ERIC Clearinghouse: